

## LESSON 1B—NARRATIVE: HOW IS ARCHAEOLOGY CONNECTED TO THE PRESENT?

*The past is connected to the present—and to the future—through knowledge of the lifeways and challenges faced by past people.*

Try to remember some of the items that you left behind when your family last moved. Or if you haven't moved recently, imagine what you might leave behind if you did move. Some objects will tell a lot about you. Others may be a puzzle for future generations to solve. If you wanted to leave specific clues about your life, you might write a journal or diary describing daily events. You might leave photographs of family gatherings.

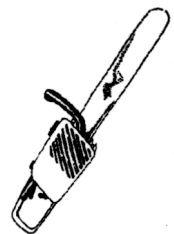
When future generations discover these items, they will learn many details of your life. These are the kinds of clues that help archaeologists understand your **culture**. Culture is the way a group of people lived together in a particular place for an extended period of time. Archaeologists study past cultures through their artifacts, features, and sites—and sometimes through written records.

Our culture's ability to communicate by writing will tell future archaeologists much about us. Writing was established a relatively short time ago, around 3000 B.C. in the Old World. The use of writing marks the time known as **history**. Reading about historic events provides much information to study the more recent past. Historical archaeologists use written evidence to help explain the artifacts and mysteries of historic cultures.

The period of time before writing's existence is known as **prehistory**. Prehistory extends over a vast span of

time, covering hundreds of thousands of years. Prehistoric archaeologists have no written material to assist them in studying the past. Only artifacts, ecofacts, features, and sites provide clues to prehistoric cultures. Writing did not exist in Montana much before A.D. 1800. All time before that date is our state's prehistory. However, written communication was present in many locations in our country much earlier. The boundary between historic and prehistoric time varies from place to place throughout the world.

Archaeologists study both historic and prehistoric people. In studying historical times, they focus on artifacts, but they also use written records. In contrast, when studying prehistoric people, they must rely on artifacts without the help of the written word. Sometimes the stories that members of a culture passed down over generations can help us to understand the distant past. These stories are called **oral history**. But mostly, archaeologists must study artifacts to learn about prehistory. They study the technology of prehistoric people. They determine hunting methods by analyzing ancient tools found at sites. Other artifacts reveal the processes used to gather and prepare food. These objects also help archaeologists learn about the plants and animals of long ago. And by studying the remains of prehistoric humans, archaeologists discover information about diet and past living condi-



Tools have changed over time. Technology, or the tools used, is one characteristic archaeologists use to describe a culture.

*Courtesy Kootenai National Forest.*

tions. They investigate Paleoindian and Archaic shelters to learn how those prehistoric peoples protected themselves from the natural elements.

The study of prehistoric archaeology is only about 150 years old. The search for understanding the ancient past is just beginning. Archaeologists most frequently find prehistoric artifacts made of stone. Stone is a material that is **inorganic** and **non-perishable**. This means that stone is a non-living material that can survive for thousands of years. Other items made of plant or animal matter, like wood, leather, fiber, bone, and hair, are **organic** and **perishable**. If left exposed to the elements, they decay within a few hundred years. And because organic artifacts often do not survive, a prehistoric archaeologist's work can be very challenging.

Artifacts are found throughout our state. The ancient peoples of Montana were nomadic, moving across the land in search of food. They did not remain in one location for any great length of time. For this reason, any site that is undisturbed and contains many prehistoric artifacts is extremely rare and valuable for archaeologists.

The environment in which Montana's early people lived presented them with many difficulties. They could be injured or killed while hunting large animals. Their sources of food varied with the seasons and climate. And when the climate changed, they had to alter their patterns of **mobility**, or movement. Their survival depended on their ability to adapt to the rugged land and its challenges. People today face similar problems regarding technology, subsistence, and shelter. Understanding the

difficulties of ancient people provides knowledge for both present and future cultures. When we know about weather conditions and the availability of food in the past, we are better prepared to cope with food production in the future. Patterns in the development and decline of past civilizations supply knowledge for current **societies**, or communities, helping them to co-exist.

Archaeologists want to know who the ancient people were, where they came from, and how they lived. Ancient people across the world resembled each other, sharing many traits. Even if they were not our direct ancestors, they may be like them. The information archaeologists gather tells us where we have been and who we are. Archaeology enables us to experience the richness and diversity of past cultures. Learning about ancient people gives us an understanding of the present. And it gives us the ability to predict the future. After all, our present, and our future, will soon become the past.

## LESSON 1B—VOCABULARY: HOW IS ARCHAEOLOGY CONNECTED TO THE PRESENT?

culture \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

history \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

inorganic \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

mobility \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

non-perishable \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

oral history \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

organic \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

perishable \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

prehistory \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

society \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 1B—ARCH ACTIVITY: PAST TIMES

**Grades:** 3–8

**Time:** 40 minutes (homework)

**Content Area:** history, math, and writing

**Who:** whole class and individual

**Materials:**

**timeline materials:**

**ruler & construction paper**

**writing tools**

**Arch Journal**

---

### OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME

- Students will apply their past knowledge to that of the ancient past.
- Students will create a personal timeline, with specific guidelines.

### ACTIVITY

1. Instruct students in creating a personal timeline. Give all students specific time representations for measurement, example: 2 inches = 1 year. Also, give instructions for a horizontal format and size.

2. Students should place the following on their timelines, by year:

- ~ 5 events from each student's life that are significant
- ~ 1 important historical event that has happened during their lifetime
- ~ 2 events from their family's history that happened before they were born

~ 2 events that they predict will happen to them in the future

You may need to share examples from your own life. Work on the timelines may take place in class, or may be a homework assignment.

3. Place the finished timelines on a wall or bulletin board. Make sure the dates are vertically aligned.

4. Complete the following discussion activities. Individuals should record work in their Arch Journals.

- ~ What is the range of dates

represented?

~ What is the difference in the range?

~ Which year has the most representation?

~ What are similarities in the timelines? Differences?

### EXTENSIONS

3–5:

- Research vocabulary.

See: Lesson 1B—Vocabulary

- Study genealogy and create a family tree.

6–8:

- Create a world civilization timeline for a specific century.

- Research the history of writing and the invention of the printing press.